

Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



STATE OF ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF LAW
1275 W. WASHINGTON STREET
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2926
WWW.AZAG.GOV

ANDREA M. ESQUER
PRESS SECRETARY
PHONE: (602) 542-8019
CELL PHONE: (602) 725-2200

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Terry Goddard Announces Agreement with Kroger Co. to Curb Tobacco Sales to Minors

(Phoenix, Ariz. – Oct. 23, 2007) Attorney General Goddard today announced an agreement with Kroger Co. to implement new procedures to reduce sales of tobacco products to minors. Goddard joined 42 state Attorneys General and Guam in this agreement.

Kroger is the nation's largest grocery chain with 2,468 supermarkets in 31 states and 779 convenience stores in 15 states. In Arizona, Kroger operates the Fry's, Fry's Marketplace and Smith's grocery store chains. Kroger operates 120 stores in Arizona, making the state the company's fifth largest market.

"Partnerships with retailers, such as Kroger, are extremely important to our efforts to reduce youth access to tobacco products in Arizona," Goddard said. "I commend Kroger for recognizing its role in preventing these illegal sales and protecting the health of our children."

The Kroger agreement, in the form of an Assurance of Voluntary Compliance (AVC), is the 11th agreement produced by an ongoing, multi-state enforcement effort by state Attorneys General. Previous agreements cover all 7-Eleven, CVS, Wal-Mart, Walgreens and Rite Aid stores, as well as all gas stations and convenience stores operating under the Conoco, Phillips 66, 76, Exxon, Mobil, BP, Amoco, ARCO and Chevron brand names in the signing states. Combined, the agreements have established tobacco sale enforcement protocols at over 80,000 retail outlets across the nation.

In the agreement announced today, Kroger agreed to establish the following protocols in all of its stores within the signing states:

- Check the ID of any person purchasing tobacco products when the person appears to be under the age of 27 and accept only valid government-issued photo ID as proof of age.
- Prohibit self-service displays of tobacco products, the use of vending machines to sell tobacco products, distribution of free tobacco product samples, sale of cigarette look-alike products and the sale of smoking paraphernalia to minors.
- Hire an independent entity to conduct random compliance checks annually in the signing states.
- Limit tobacco signage to brand names, logos and pricing, and ensure that all tobacco advertising inside the store is confined to the area where tobacco products are sold.

- Train employees in state and local laws and company policies regarding tobacco sales to minors, including health-related reasons for laws that restrict youth access to tobacco.

Launched in 2000, the multi-state enforcement effort by the Attorneys General seeks to secure national retailers' agreement to incorporate "best practices" aimed at reducing tobacco sales to minors. These practices were developed by the Attorneys General in consultation with researchers and state and federal tobacco control officials.

The Attorneys General have long recognized that youth access to tobacco products ranks among the most serious public health problems. Studies show more than 80 percent of adult smokers began smoking before the age of 18. Research indicates that every day in the United States, more than 2,000 people under the age of 18 start smoking and that one-third of those persons ultimately will die from a tobacco-related disease. Young people are particularly susceptible to the hazards of tobacco, often showing signs of addiction after smoking only a few cigarettes.

To report a retailer you suspect to be selling tobacco to minors, please call the Counter Strike Hotline at 1-866-342-7855 or (602) 542-1809 within the Phoenix area.

###